

Early Bird 23 – 29 June 2012

## **SAFETY/SECURITY**

## **LEADERS/POLITICS**

### **Red Cross bemoans bloody conflicts (June 26)**

Crisis and armed conflicts in the Middle East and in Africa have caused immeasurable suffering for millions of people and made them dependant on emergency aid. In addition, there are the ramifications of natural disasters, such as droughts and flooding in many parts of the world which also require emergency aid. In 2011 6.8 million people were depending Red Cross for medical care. Furthermore Red Cross distributed food to 4.9 million people in 2011. Since the situation in some of the trouble spots changed quickly, Red Cross workers had to be flexible and react quickly to the often very complex situations, according to Jakob Kellenberger, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Red Cross rendered medical and humanitarian aid in 80 countries and spent €760.8 million in 2011 plus \$205 million for the cost of the organization. The most costly aid missions were in Afghanistan, Congo, Ivory Coast, Libyan, Mali as well as in South Sudan, Somalia and Jemen. The International Committee of the Red Cross was founded 150 years ago in Genf, Switzerland.

### **4th Rotarian Rowdy River Raft Race in Schweinfurt (June 25)**

It is only the 4th Rotarian Rowdy River Raft Race, but it already has become a tradition. 84 teams and more than 1,000 individuals participated in the race. The lone American team, headed by Capt. Steve Barnaby of the U.S. Army Garrison Schweinfurt, placed 2nd in their heat, and 21st out of 90 teams overall. “We made it to the semi-finals before we were thoroughly destroyed,” Barnaby said. The organizer, Bernd Meidel, was satisfied with the outcome with next to a record high number of participants. The number of visitors also went up from 4,000 in 2011 to 6,800 in 2012. In three years the Rotary Club contributed €35,000 to charity organizations from the raft races. This year’s profit of €3,500 will be donated to a social welfare organization.

### **Diplomas for the youngest students, 500 children attend “children’s university” (June 25)**

The lecture room of the children’s university in Würzburg was full last Saturday morning, even though many of the parents and children were still tired from watching a European Cup soccer game the night before. But most of the elementary school students did not want to miss the last lecture in this semester. Another reason was that many of the diligent students were getting a diploma. Of course they were also interested in the theme of the lecture: “What is Bee ‘Maja’ doing now?” And the children were told that one bee visits about 3,000 flowers per day and that a bee queen lays about 2,000 eggs and what else goes on in a busy bee hive. After the lecture the students that attended at least 3 lectures received a diploma. Children who already had 3 diplomas received a golden diploma. In the fall the children’s university will start again.

### **High failure rate in written high school (Abitur) exams (June 23)**

More than 10 percent of the approximately 38,000 high school students in Bavaria have failed their written exams, according to a spokesman of the Bavarian ministry of education and cultural

affairs. However, the number of those failing the written exams is not identical with the number of students who graduate, since the students have the possibility to take a verbal exam to bring up their grades. Many of the students take those verbal exams and are able to graduate after all. Also, at the Olympia-Morata-High School in Schweinfurt, 9 of 64 students failed the written exams, according to principle Anette Hanke, which equals 14 percent. The reason for the high failure rate is probably due to the fact that before the students could take the exams on their favorite subjects. But now every student is forced to take the exams in German, mathematics, and a foreign language.

## **ECONOMY**

### **The end of megalomania: West State to close (June 29)**

The finance crisis and Brussels were able to achieve, what politicians and bankers have been preventing for decades: The number of German state banks is decreasing. With the divestiture of the West State Bank in North-Rhine Westphalia on June 30, North-Rhine Westphalia is the first large federal state without its own state bank. With the closure of the West State Bank in Düsseldorf it is the first time since the beginning of the finance crisis five years ago that a large bank vanishes. The new concept includes the following: The thrift and savings plan business and the business with small and medium size companies will be handled by one of its affiliated banks, the State Bank of Hesse-Thuringia which will take over these activities with €40 billion assets and approximately 450 employees. The “Sparkasse” (savings bank) family provides €1 billion for the sections of the banks that will fall under the Hesse-Thuringia state bank. All other assets and liabilities will be turned over to the Bad Bank which handles the toxic assets of the State Bank of North-Rhine Westphalia. The remaining sections of the bank with thousands of employees will be transformed into a service company. Under the name Portigon Financial Services it will offer services such as loans management. A key account will be the Bad Bank. The service company will belong to the state of North-Rhine Westphalia which will put out €1 billion. The federal government will leave €2 billion of its €3 billion silent deposit there. The last executive of the State Bank of NRW, Dietrich Voigtländer, stated: “I am convinced that the sector of the state banks in its present set-up will not be able to survive in the long run. In order to reduce capacities fusions are the most economically reasonable.”

### **Unemployment rates in June 2012 (June 29)**

City Schweinfurt 6.1 %, County of Schweinfurt 2.5%, Bavaria 3.4% in Germany 6.6%

### **Head of Opel relies on alleviated reorganization and alliance with Peugeot (June 28)**

Fighting costs that had gotten out of hand, the deficient car maker Opel counts on an alliance with the French automobile group Peugeot-Citroen. An extensive reduction in workforce and closure of plants do not matter, according to the revised recapitalization plan which head of Opel, Karl-Friedrich Stracke, wants to present to the board of directors on Thursday—which the representatives of the trade unions will agree to, according to information from the Deutsche Presse Agentur (dpa). In the new plan there is no mention of closing the Opel plant in Bochum and the new plan addresses the new growth potentials like the foreign markets Australia and Russia. The Opel group is presently negotiating with the works council and the trade union for metal workers if reduction in forces by the end of 2016 at Opel plants in Germany, as previously announced, can be prevented.

**More employees for metal industry in Lower Franconia (June 27)**

The metal and electrical industry in Lower Franconia had a considerable increase of employees last year. According to an announcement by the labor unions of the electrical industry, the number of workers increased by 2.2 percent in 2011 to 87,500. Bertram Brossardt, CEO of the Association of the Bavarian metal and electrical industry emphasized: "The metal and electrical industry in Lower Franconia has been able to continue its recovery after the serious economic crisis and has created many new jobs." In 2011 11.8 percent of all employees in the Bavarian metal and electrical industry worked in Lower Franconia.

**SPORT****European Soccer Cup 2012**

Germany – Italy 1:2

Germany – Greek 4:2

Spain – France 2:1

Great Britain – Italy 2:4

Portugal – Spain 2:4

Germany – Italy 1:2